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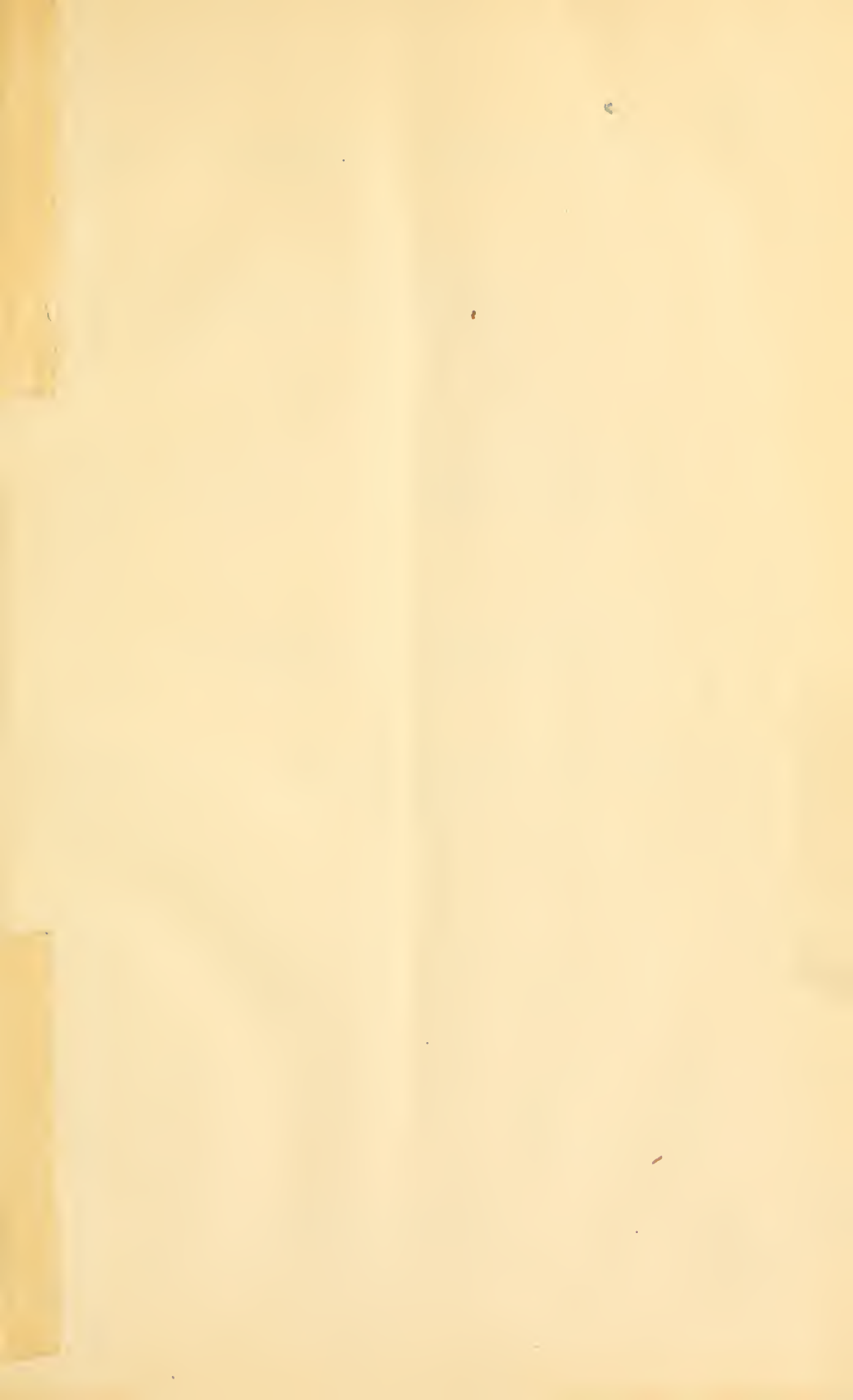
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# Our Country's New Era:

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

SOCIETY OF THE ALUMNI

OF

WITTENBERG COLLEGE,

AT THE COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT, SPRINGFIELD, OHIO,  
JUNE 25, A. D. 1873.

BY

HON. JACOB D. COX.

*Olson*

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## OUR COUNTRY'S NEW ERA.

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IT is already a trite saying, that our republic entered upon a new era of its history at the close of the late war. Unfortunately, trite sayings are most apt to receive a mechanical sort of assent which implies very little thought ; and truths which ought to be fruitful lose their stimulating force by mere dint of frequent repetition, and are received with a languid recognition and drowsy acquiescence, which quite takes the life out of them.

So, I fancy, many a young man who is entering upon his career says to himself, " True, we *are* at the beginning of a new era," and may have a vague idea that it is a glorious thing, and that we are somehow in a more imposing and noble attitude among the nations ; but does not stop to inquire what the new era means, nor whether it implies any new relations or larger responsibilities for himself.

It has seemed to me that I could do no better than call your attention to some of the characteristics of this new era as they present themselves to me ; to point out some of the tendencies of the time, both good and bad, and some of the dangers as well as the glories that may be in store for us.

The influence of the liberally educated young men of the country may guide the national career, and ought, at least, to be strong enough to prevent our

being swept away from the right path of progress. It is too true that this class keeps more and more aloof from active political life; but it is also happily true that the spread of opinion outward from the most intelligent and cultivated, goes on quietly and steadily, forming a public sentiment, which, soon or late, controls politicians and legislatures.

It would not be rash to say that if the graduates of American colleges during the present decade were of one heart and mind as to the larger policy of the country, agreeing upon the true theory of progress, its proper direction and character, and uniting in a common, earnest desire and purpose to guide the nation in accordance with it, they would give to its affairs a direction and bent, which would control its destiny for a century—perhaps for many centuries.

To do this, it would not be necessary to enter into the debasing struggle for place. On the contrary, it would demand the most complete indifference to all that the lower order of politicians prizes and strives for. Those who would make changes in public opinion necessarily find their work anything but a popular one, and that it does not lead them into much political temptation; at least, they are not likely to be tempted much with places of power and importance. Their work is essentially that of minorities; and when they have educated the community to the point where they find the majority with them, it will probably be only when the vigor of their life is spent.

There is no occasion to complain of this. It is a natural law of popular government that their elected officers should be, at best, only the exponents of the average condition of public sentiment; and those who love place and set their ambition upon it, shrink in-

stinctively from getting in advance of the community to whose suffrages they look for a continuance of political life.

Let us accept the result, and recognize the fact that public opinion must be formed by another class than the professed politicians, and that it is the office of these simply to obey the word of command when the people have been taught to give it by those who know how to teach.

Here is a noble sense in which you may become "the power behind the throne;" for no generous mind will doubt that it is nobler to do one's part in molding public sentiment, than to seek power by shouting with the majority of the moment. They who feel repelled from the intrigues and ambitions of common politics, may still find ample room for the exertion of all their powers to benefit their fellow-men, and be assured that their work will be all the more efficient by reason of its being free from any appearance of self-seeking.

The nation has passed from its youth to its manhood. Its place among the peoples of the earth is no longer in doubt. It has endured every test of the strength of its frame and the vigor of its constitution which nations are commonly tried with; and nobody now questions its right to rank among the first powers of the world. The last great trial it had to undergo, settled the last of the doubts which a statesman of the Old World would be likely to harbor, and proved that the republic was strong enough in its internal organization to endure the shock of a great civil war, to put great armies in the field, to submit for years to the exceptional powers of a semi-military government for the whole country, and yet return quietly to the old ways of self-government and representative rule.

In mere bulk, also, it has outgrown most of its rivals, and has the *prestige* which only superior force can give: for human civilization has not yet made obsolete the proverb, that "might makes right;" and the claim to mere existence and independence is not sacred, even in the eyes of republics, till it is backed by power enough to make it respected and to uphold it against all comers. Until the establishment of the new German Empire, no modern nation has numbered more than forty millions of civilized citizens. By counting wild hordes which were theirs only because they lived within their geographical borders, or by including in a similar way dependencies held only by the power of conquest and which never became part of the nation itself, several modern powers have pretended to a greater numerical strength than that named; but if we look simply to the elements which have a natural unity, and which give a people its power for defense or for aggression, to which may be addressed appeals to patriotism, and from which the safety and perpetuity of the political organization must come, it can not be denied that our country to-day has as great physical strength as any nation which has existed since the Christian era. When, to this estimate of absolute power, we add the fact that there neither is nor can be any dangerous neighbor; that our government is not only "easily chief" on the American continent, but that our only real rivals are separated from us by great oceans,—it becomes plain that it is strictly within the bounds of moderation to say that no nation on earth is so strong relatively to others, or is so completely free from dangers of external trouble and foreign invasion or war.

I fear you may begin to think that the near approach of our national anniversary is having its influence

upon me, and that I am running into the vein of brag-gadocio which is the established type of Fourth-of-July oratory. My purpose is really the opposite of this. The conclusion I would draw, is, that with the fully developed power of manhood should come the modesty of assured position and strength. The rapidly growing boy's awkwardness has given place to matured symmetry of limb and muscle; and the tendency of his associates to ridicule his proportions and his gait, has changed to admiration and respect. It is time then to put off boyish bravado and quarrelsomeness. It is no longer worth while to go about asking who dares knock the chip off his shoulder, or to go through the youngster's alternations between speechless bashfulness in society and fierce assertions of his place and position.

It was for a long time treated as an open question, whether there was not danger of our republican institutions being overthrown and some form of monarchy substituted for them. Here and there a theorist would argue that the evils of democracy outweighed all others; and it was perhaps a popular delusion that an aristocratic or monarchic party was at work undermining the foundations of the republic. No one will deny that this fear may now be sent to the limbo of abolished bugbears; and a little reflection will show that it never had a reason for its existence. Governmental institutions, like manners and customs, are the outgrowth of natural tendencies of human nature, modified by circumstances of time and place. You may impose a rule upon a people by external force; but until you have crushed all native peculiarities of character out of them, it will not be accepted by them, and will remain an odious foreign tyranny, as much hated after centuries of do-

minion as it was at first. The instances in history which seem to point to a different conclusion, will be found on examination not to be inconsistent with the position stated. It is said that Alsace, though a German province, had, in the two centuries after its conquest by Louis XIV, become French in sentiment and affection; so that its people to-day regard their absorption into the German Empire with as much aversion as the people of Orleans or the Isle de France would do. The full truth of the assertion might be questioned; but waiving that, it is still plain that the history of Alsace shows little ground for the growth of anything like a national character. A petty principality on the border land between France and Germany, the debatable ground in every struggle between them, never long incorporated into any great power, and never strong enough to stand alone, a change of masters was for it a matter of common occurrence—almost the normal condition of things; and we can easily understand that when it became a French province, and the policy of that government was to foster its material welfare, and make all its burdens easy, there was no hereditary patriotism or stubborn nationality of character making the Alsaciens so distinctively German that the present generation should feel that they had any national part in the Fatherland of the Prussian or Saxon across the Rhine. For them it was a mere change of rulers—putting off an easy yoke, under which they had grown fat and contented, for an untried one. It was not returning to any former condition or traditionary government; for in the seventeenth century there was no real nationality in Germany, and the Prussian was as much a foreigner to them as the Bohemian or the Hun. The great revival of German

unity in the past generation found Alsace outside the pale, and we must wait for another generation to prove to us whether the influences of blood and race will not revive, and a single lifetime undo all that two centuries of French rule had accomplished.

Our own case is much more analogous to that of the ancient republics, because they alone give us instances of the natural development of changes in society and government from purely internal causes. From the overthrow of the Roman kings to the establishment of the empire was a little over four hundred years; and even that long period scarce measures half the time during which the traditional and hereditary hatred of the name and the insignia of royalty prevented the most ambitious of rulers from assuming the name of king. When we remember that this was so in a people which had none of the advantages of popular education, and who must therefore depend upon oral inculcation of principle and transmission of sentiment from father to son, it is not difficult to believe that political tendencies, like physical and mental peculiarities, become hereditary, and so lead to their own perpetuation and to independent and characteristic development.

I shall have occasion to recur to this subject and to some of its modifications and limitations; but the present statement is enough to warrant the conclusion there has never been, since the beginning of the eighteenth century at least, a time when there was either the danger or the possibility that any other than a republican government could exist in our country. Aristocratic distinctions in society never took root here. The law of the "survival of the fittest" receives strong confirmation in the history of American settlements, where the vigorous republicanism of the New England Puritans was

planted in a congenial soil, and soon occupied the ground, to the exclusion and death of every other political principle. The few titled nobles who were tempted into the country seldom stayed long, or if they did, they remained as exotics ; and there was never more chance for a hereditary nobility to become naturalized here than there was for the propagation of forest trees upon the wild prairies. The native growth smothered the foreign germ with the inevitableness of fate.

In the new era of our history we start with the assurance of certainty that no external interference can seriously derange the natural progress of our development. The causes which shall work out blessings or curses for us must be all internal. There may be accretions of territory and of communities now outside of our limits, or there may be divisions and secessions by which members of the federal union may break away or be expelled ; but, in any event, there must remain a great republican nation, ranking in numbers and wealth among the very first in the world, and maintaining the forms of self-government. It is no invasion of the domain of prophecy to say that the analogy of causes which we know have worked in the history of the world hitherto, makes it safe to assume that the duration of our government in its present form in all essential respects, will not be less than that of the most durable political organizations of any historic epoch. The era of our national youth was that in which the patriot's duty was to fix the formative principles of government, and give them such nourishment as to insure our reaching maturity. That care may now be dismissed. It is not rash to say that for thousands of years there will be a great republic on this continent occupying its temperate zone. The task for us and our children will be



to see to it that republicanism shall be fruitful in blessings as it ought to be ; that under the forms of freedom there may not be abuses of government as bad as any despotism produces ; that we shall recognize the truth that our system will be a failure unless it secures the greatest practical good for all, minorities as well as majorities, individuals as well as communities.

We have been too apt to assume that there is a sovereign virtue in the mere form of democratic government ; and we have had a way of tossing our hats into the air and shouting ourselves hoarse every time a so-called republic is set up in Europe—never stopping to ask whether the people have become fit for it since the last *fiasco* of that sort happened. There can be no doubt at all that modern progress is in the direction of republicanism ; and to my mind there is just as little doubt that changes of the form of government are likely to go on faster than the internal preparation of the people for them. It is of infinitely more consequence that the people should show that they understand the nature of representative government in their legislatures, and that they have the respect for law which makes the rights of minorities as safe as those of majorities, than they should elect their chief executive. Our forms of self-government simply put the responsibility more squarely upon us to make the government a good or a bad one, and we may be quite sure that there is no corruption in human societies so utterly unendurable as that of a rotten democracy. When the ballot-box registers only the will of your Tweeds and Barnards, as has been the case in more cities than one—when organized lobbies can reckon to a dollar upon the cost of any legislation by which “ rings ” may wish to fleece the public, as has been the case in more states

than one;—when this depravity reaches national as well as local affairs, and the moral sense of the community becomes so torpid that only faint protests are heard, and no combined and energetic activity in reform follows,—though we may still call ourselves a republic, the subjects of the Czar may sarcastically wish us joy of our freedom, and thank God that no such progress has reached the Russias.

My own faith is unfaltering that the result with us will not ultimately be disastrous; but I would not conceal the belief that we have many tribulations to pass through before we shall reach the experienced wisdom and general practical virtue needed to make self-rule a real success. We shall many a time have to hang our heads at the exposure of our shame; but at last we shall learn the lesson, and solve the problem of the harmony of the greatest general good with the least individual discomfort. The best guaranty for a good outcome is found in the national capacity to learn by our own experience. I have somewhere seen it said that an intelligent Hindoo described the difference between his own people and the English as consisting chiefly in the fact that the European seemed to have accumulated as capital the whole experience of former ages and to make constant use of it, whilst the Asiatic repeated mechanically the customs of his fathers, with almost as little thought of improvement as the birds in the trees. In this country, circumstances have intensified the practical readiness and invention which characterized our progenitors; and it is hardly conceivable that the great mass of the people shall not retain and transmit this hereditary tendency in vigor enough to make it certain that the remedy will at last be applied to the great mischief from which danger might come to the safety or the welfare of the community.

I do not propose to discuss or even to enumerate the various questions relating to the structure and machinery of the government or the organization of its co-ordinate departments, some of which are already beginning to be agitated, and others of which are certain soon to be raised. Neither shall I attempt to examine any of the questions arising concerning the relations of capital and labor, or the conflict of rights and interests between classes or individuals. So far as they have much present interest, they have already become matters of political debate; and if that were not a good reason for avoiding them, my time would not permit me to discuss even the smallest of them.

I prefer rather to ask your attention to some phases of the question of the physical organization and exterior relations of the nation; to inquire briefly what is the "manifest destiny" of the American people as to its growth and composition; and to touch upon some matters which seem important and interesting in these respects.

The disposition to regard the condition of society with which we are familiar, as the natural order of things, is so strong that very few people seem to comprehend the fact that in nearly every particular our social and political organization is an anomaly in the world's history.

We may have a little different way of putting it, but at bottom the common opinion among us does not differ much from that of the Chinese, to whom all but their own people are "outside barbarians." We think we live in a condition of things so natural that our freedom and general welfare may be left to take care of themselves; and we believe that any painstaking attempt to forecast or to provide for the distant future, how-

ever curious as mere matter of speculation, is wholly useless and unnecessary from any practical point of view.

I shall not take back a word I have said as to my confidence in our future; but I still insist that unless there be a wide diffusion of intelligence in regard to the causes which produce or secure national unity, and which develop the characteristics that fit men for self-government, we shall be in great danger of going through most painful convulsions, and of learning in the most costly way what a moderate degree of foresight might have taught us. Look, for example, at our recent terrible experience in regard to negro slavery. Perhaps no one fully comprehended the mischiefs which lay in the hold of the ship that brought the first cargo of slaves to our coast; but many a man even then could see that the tendency of the thing was evil, and more than one conscience protested against the wrong. The common sentiment of the time, however, did not condemn slavery as a crime. The slave-trade itself was not thought to be inconsistent with devout piety; and it was considered an honorable crest upon the escutcheon of Admiral Hawkins, one of the heroes who saved England from the Spanish Armada, when he placed there the effigy of a manacled negro, in testimony of the means by which he had amassed his wealth. To the great body of civilized people of that time, the slave-trade was simply an innocent method of obtaining cheap labor in new colonies. Looking back at it now, we marvel at the lack of foresight which permitted the beginning of so great wrongs and sufferings, and which failed to see how the whole people would one day suffer the consequences in the terrible scourge of civil war. The momentary profit in money, the satisfaction of

seeing a more rapid growth of the young community, totally blinded our fathers to the sure penalties of the future. We, their children, may groan out, "Would to God they could have seen in that day the things that pertained to their peace!" but it may still be questioned whether we too are not following their example and planting the seeds of future mischiefs almost as great.

The question may be stated in this general form, viz: Are there any peculiarities of physical, mental, and moral organization which are necessary conditions of the fitness of a community for self-government and for true progress?

If we ask whether all existing communities and nations are fit for democratic institutions, very few of our acquaintances would answer yes; but if we vary the form and inquire whether we run any risk in receiving within our federal union other states of different race and characteristics, most of the same people would hesitate to give an affirmative answer.

Let us look at some of the conditions of the problem from a stand-point a scholar need not be ashamed to take.

In his excellent lectures on Ancient Law, Professor Maine says: "In spite of overwhelming evidence, it is most difficult for a citizen of Western Europe to bring thoroughly home to himself the truth that the civilization which surrounds him is a rare exception in the history of the world. The tone of thought common among us, all our hopes, fears, and speculations, would be materially affected, if we had vividly before us the relation of the progressive races in the totality of human life. It is indisputable that much the greatest part of mankind has never shown a particle of desire that its civil institutions should be improved, since the mo-

ment when external completeness was first given to them by their embodiment in some permanent record." \*

Not only is this forcible statement true in the very general form in which it is here given, but the same fact shows itself in the degrees of readiness with which the Western nations, classed together by the author as progressive, adapt themselves to the work of progress, or intrench themselves in forms and habits peculiar to themselves.

In what I have to say on this subject I shall make no apology for a somewhat more free use of quotation than would commonly be quite consistent with good taste, because it is part of my purpose to challenge your attention, not so much by what you might consider my personal speculations, as by the evidence that established authorities in history and political philosophy have recognized all the principles from which I shall seek to make deductions. In this way it will more forcibly appear that we have only to apply the well-known lessons of history to our own case in order to judge reasonably of our future, and that we shall be the less excusable if we fail to profit by such teaching.

The most familiar illustration of the different degrees of adaptability to civil freedom amongst enlightened nations is the contrast between Great Britain and France. It is not true that the French people were slower in comprehending or admiring the theory of representative government than their neighbors. On the contrary, a vivid and quick perception of all that is fine in theory and logical in political philosophy has always been one of their most marked characteristics. The States General were assembled in France almost as

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\* Maine's Ancient Law, p. 22.

early as Parliaments in England; and Magna Charta was not so complete or so systematic a statement of civil rights as was several times made in France in the same early period. Yet, England has gone steadily forward in the path of civil liberty, whilst France has been constantly vibrating between efforts at complete freedom and the most abject submission to complete despotism. In the one nation we see the ability to bide their time without abandoning a fixed purpose; in the other, an impatience of all delay and a skepticism of all results which are not to-day within reach. In the one there is a willingness to struggle in a minority without losing hope; in the other, a total inability to endure reverses or to accept unpopularity. In the one there is a stubborn pride in individuality and an egotism that is not dismayed at standing alone; in the other, a gregariousness that makes them move together under a common impulse. Dr. Lieber calls this last trait "the Celtic disposition of being swayed in masses, and a consequent proclivity toward centralization in politics, religion, and literature, and a certain inability to remain long in the opposition, or to stand aloof from a party."\*

One of the most judicious of the French historians (Henri Martin) has fully recognized this hereditary lack of persistence among his countrymen, and its effect upon their civil progress. He says: "The idea of representative government never became fixed in the heart of the people. They invoked the assembly of the States General as a great remedy for great evils, and forgot them both as soon as the government used any moderation or caution in its demands."†

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\* Civil Liberty and Self-Government, p. 55.

† "L'idée du gouvernement représentatif n'était point établie au cœur des masses: elles invoquaient les États Généraux comme un grand

It needs no argument to show that national traits of character of the kind last referred to, must in a great degree determine the capacity of a people for self-government, and may be reckoned on with as much certainty as any other forces in nature.

It would indeed be rash and unnecessary to assert that such traits are absolutely permanent and unchanging. The indisputable truth is enough for our purpose, and that truth is that the persistence of such characteristics is so great that we may consider them constant forces in all ordinary historic epochs. It is very curious, and sometimes amusing, to see to how great an extent these hereditary tendencies go. They are physical as well as mental, and often show us that what we would take for an accident of the character of a single person, is in fact the common property of a tribe. We should be apt to regard guerilla warfare in modern Spain as a peculiarity induced by modern circumstances. But Mommsen shows us the same habit among the same people as early as the year 76 B. C., when Sertorius was able to carry on a desultory war against Rome for years, with forces at times amounting to 150,000 men, and then melting to a mere handful, as caprice would seize them, or as hope or despondency alternately swayed them.\*

In every union of peoples of different race these stubborn facts in their nature must necessarily make themselves felt; and it may be questioned whether modern civilization has had much effect in softening the

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remède contre les grands maux, et les oublièrent quand le gouvernement mettait dans ses exigences un peu de réserve et de modération." *Hist. de France*, VII, 191.

\* Mommsen : *Hist. Rome*, Vol. IV, p. 33.



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asperities and prejudices which have their root in radical diversities of thought and of desire, of instinctive loves and aversions. The great historical authority I last referred to attributed the old wars between Europe and Asia to these causes, and says that they were simply part of what he calls "the huge duel between the West and the East, which has been transmitted from the struggle of Marathon to the present generation, and will perhaps reckon its future by thousands of years, as it has reckoned its past." \*

We must not overlook, however, another important influence in the case of new nations sprung from colonies, as our own has done; and that is, that upon new soil, transplanted men, like plants, often develop new and unexpected characters. Who could have predicted that a colony from the upper Indus could have become so entirely new a type of men as the Greeks became, and should have achieved a civilization which has been the continued wonder of the world, whilst their cousins in the mother country showed no trace of a similar progress? How it was that the new *habitat* changed the man, and what part in the change was due to new necessities, dangers, and rivalries, co-operating with the influences of climate and country, we can not tell. The result we know, and that something of a similar kind in similar circumstances is by no means rare. Even in the brief period since Europeans colonized this country, distinctive and easily recognized national traits of person, feature, and character have been produced in the American people. Here the Anglo-Saxon has easily fused with the other Teutonic families of Europe; and a very few generations have been enough to mold the

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\* Mommsen : Hist. Rome, Vol. III, p. 278.

whole into a common type wherever they have lived in the same local community.

A most interesting example of the often unexpected way in which the characteristics of colonists are sometimes transformed by the power of their new circumstances, is found in the case of the old Norman conquerors of Ireland. In an eloquent passage on this subject, Froude says: "Prior to experience, it would have been equally reasonable to expect that the modern Englishman would adopt the habits of the Hindoo or the Mohican, as that the fiery knights of Normandy would have stooped to imitate a race whom they despised as slaves; that they would have flung away their very knightly names to assume a barbarous equivalent; and would so utterly have cast aside the commanding features of their northern extraction, that their children's children could be distinguished neither in soul nor body, neither in look, in dress, in language, nor in disposition, from the Celts whom they had subdued. Such, however, was the extraordinary fact. The Irish who had been conquered in the field revenged their defeat on the minds and hearts of their conquerors, and in yielding, yielded only to fling over their new masters the subtle spell of the Celtic disposition."\*

Yet there are limitations plainly to be seen in the direction and force of this tendency to assimilation. The Latin races have not shown a readiness to amalgamate with the other European families; whilst they have, on the other hand, exhibited far less aversion to mixing with the native tribes. The French, in Canada, from the time of the earliest settlements, took kindly to the Indian ways of life; and the "*couriers des bois*"

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\* Froude's England, Vol. II, pp. 241, 242.

were the forerunners of a large class of half-breed trappers, who spread over the continent from the great lakes to the Pacific ocean, adopting the habits, customs, and language of the wild tribes, and losing their own civilization without having the smallest elevating influence upon the savages. The assimilation which took place in this manner was notoriously a "leveling downward," of which the result was unmixed degradation. One would have been inclined to predict that the English and French in Canada would very soon have mingled in one indistinguishable community; but it was not so. The "*habitans*" of Lower Canada showed far more disposition to mix with the Indians than with the English; and when, after the close of our revolutionary war, the English rule in those provinces was fully acquiesced in, the difficulties between the people of different national descent were such that a territorial division of government was made, in the hope that such a separation of interests would result in peace. The momentary effect seemed good; but Harriet Martineau, in her history of England during the present century, distinctly traces the so-called "patriot war" of 1837 to the jealousies and animosities which proved to be hereditary in the races. She says: "The country to the west was to be purely British, while the French were to keep themselves as unchanged as they pleased. The government had no misgiving about this in 1791, when the thing was done; but Mr. Fox foresaw the mischief that might arise, and gave emphatic warning of it."\*

The history of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in both North and South America only emphasizes the facts shown in regard to the French. The practical re-

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\* Martineau's Hist. of England, Vol. IV, p. 128.

sult has been, that whichever race has been largely predominant in the settlement of colonies of any considerable size, that race has maintained its supremacy in the domain of intellectual and moral characteristics, or has changed only by partial assimilation with the uncivilized population with which it came in contact. Where colonies of the Latin races have been conquered or annexed by their more vigorous European rivals, they do not seem to have become lost in the common mass by amalgamation; or if so, it has been an exceedingly slow process: but they have rather seemed to be smothered out, and to have dwindled away by a process of steady decline—the result of their inability to endure the kind of competition or rude struggle for life to which they have been subjected under unfavorable circumstances. Where they have been kept separate either by a division of territory, such as that which was made in Canada, or even where their numbers were sufficient to make a local community of an inferior size, they have still shown that striking tenacity of language, habit, and character, which has kept them a separate and peculiar people. As soon as they lost the predominance in the country they had colonized, the tide of immigration almost entirely ceased; and their relative disadvantage was greatly increased by the fact that they were getting few recruits from the mother country, whilst the English and Germanic population was strengthened by whole armies of immigrants, and increasing with a natural fecundity that proved how well they were adapted to the country and the climate.

For the temperate zone of North America, we may safely conclude that the strife is practically ended, and that its destinies are permanently committed to an English-speaking race of Anglo-German stock, whose

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national peculiarities of body and mind will closely follow the pattern already known as American. The experience of this continent will form no exception to the general law which has been discovered in the history of the peoples of the Old World, and which Merivale calls "the doctrine of the permanence of type in the majority of every mixed population, which modern experience so strongly attests."\*

The same law, however, which gives us this assurance as to the future of our own portion of the continent, teaches us that during the same great era of the future of which we have been speaking, the other European communities in tropical and Southern America must work out their destiny in an analogous way. If they shall mix more and more with the aboriginal tribes, we may look for a steady degradation, which will end in removing them from the list of civilized peoples. If they maintain the general purity of their European blood, their line of progress must still be different from ours, and their nationality remain as distinct from, and, I may say, as irreconcilable with, ours as it was in the Old World before their and our ancestors had set foot on these shores. The only thing which could alter the circumstances sufficiently to produce different results, would be a conquest of one by the other, followed by so rapid a migration of the conquering people as to change at once the majority in the conquered community and its whole organization, social as well as political.

It is safe to say that no such invasion is possible. The tropics may charm us when we make them a brief visit in winter, and our senses are steeped for a moment

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\* Merivale : *Romans under the Empire*, Vol. I, p. 259.

in the delights of the contrast between the rigors of the North and the luxuriant loveliness of the South ; but people of our blood find no congenial home there, and when once the first pleasure of novelty is over, we cry, with Tennyson's swallow—

“ I do but *wanton* in the South,  
But in the North long since my nest is made.”

The march of Empire will continue to follow the north temperate belt as it has heretofore done ; and, for any period of time which we may reasonably estimate, we may be sure there will be no naturalization of our race far south of the present limits of our country. No doubt there are high plateaus within the tropics having an elevation which counteracts in the matter of climate, the difference of latitude. But you can not occupy a country by holding and inhabiting island-like spots on its surface, or mere promontories that jut out into the torrid wildernesses of its low lands. That only is national occupation which spreads over hills and valleys alike, cultivating the mountain-sides and the coasts by one homogeneous people, who find neither situation destructive of their life or vigor.

But I am wearying you, and must hasten to draw some conclusions from the facts and arguments I have been presenting.

First, then, with regard to the internal organization of the nation and the physical character of the people, it would seem to be pretty definitely fixed. The natural gregariousness of man, which works almost as powerfully in them as in our flocks and herds, will draw like to like. Migration from the Old World will consist almost wholly of those who will quickly and readily

assimilate with the prevailing type established here ; and the rapid multiplication of the existing population, leaves no room to doubt that the law of permanence which I have stated, will find no exception here.

On the western shore of the continent only, is there danger that the influx of a permanently foreign and incongruous element may assume such proportions as to threaten serious trouble in the future. The teeming millions of China crowding upon each other within the limits of their own empire, have shown within the past fifty years a disposition to migrate in numbers large enough to form strong colonies. Farther India is rapidly filling with them, and they are trying the experiment of seeking a foothold in America.

He who fancies that the question has no greater proportions than that of the advent of a few immigrants from Spain or Italy, seems to me to take a very shallow view of the problem.

I think I have already shown you that a general concurrence of the most profound students of history, may be said to have settled the proposition that mere change of location does not change the peculiarities of race. We have seen that even when so closely related as the modern English and French are, the stubborn hereditary traits of mind and habit will exist side by side with little or no promise of harmonizing.

The Chinese have shown this persistence of type perhaps more strikingly than any race on the globe. The probabilities, therefore, are all against their becoming Americans in any sense of the word. It is likely that their tendencies of mind and character will remain with them, and that our institutions, our morality, our political tendencies, will all remain foreign to

them for many generations at least. If so, they will remain a foreign substance within the body politic, as distinctly such as a leaden bullet would be in the human body. If the bullet be small it may become encysted and remain without harm; but if its size and weight be increased, inflammation and mischief will follow as surely as the decrees of fate. If their tendency to migrate in this direction shall continue to increase, it is risking very little to say that the day will come when we shall bewail the blindness that hesitates to apply the remedy, as bitterly as we now bewail that former cry for cheap labor, which brought upon us a great national sin with its inevitable punishment. In either case the stronger party will commit the most flagrant wrongs; but until the millennial day the fact will not be altered, and we shall reap the bitter fruit of our oppression of the weak, as we have done before. But the subject is too large for more than this passing allusion.

Secondly, I desire to make application of what I have been saying to the exterior relations of our country, in respect to the extension of our territory.

There has been no appeal to the average American which has generally been stronger than that addressed to his desire for what he thinks the glory of his country; and its mere physical extent and numerical population have been the forms in which his pride has most often pictured its greatness. Hitherto there has been a certain degree of excuse for this. The power to sustain democratic institutions, in the face of the world, has not unnaturally been supposed to depend upon our growth into a physical power equal to that of the other first-class powers of the earth. This is now accomplished; and in the full recognition of it by other nations, it



seems proper to review the subject, and ask whether we have anything now to gain by territorial expansion. The communities of our own continent and those near it, have, like ourselves, assumed fixed types. To absorb them is no longer to acquire vacant territory which our own increasing people will fill. It would be to take old and matured states into our federation; and I assume that the remarks I have already made, warrant me in taking it for granted that these states would not quickly, if at all, throw off their habits and predilections, either natural or acquired. Neither do I believe, for reasons also given already, that our people would tend to migrate to and settle in those states in large numbers—I now refer more particularly to those south of us. What then would be the result? Let us suppose we had drawn within our circumference all the so-called republics of both North and South America. What should we have accomplished? It seems to me clear as noon-day that we should simply have bought a nominal extension of territory at the cost of everything resembling real nationality. We should have no unity of interest, no common language or literature, no community of thought, habit, tendency; but, on the contrary, we should have an unnatural alliance, in which all interests must clash, in which each would regard itself the victim of the rest, in which none would or could know or care for the desires of the rest, but all be necessarily suspicious and jealous of each. Nations and communities essentially foreign to each other can only have peace on the footing of independent good neighborhood, or of the accepted subjugation of one to the other.

When we talk, then, of annexing a foreign country,

we must mean one of two things: either that we propose to treat the population practically as we have treated the Indians—drive them out and destroy them by one process or another—or that we mean to hand over to them a proportionate part of the power to rule the whole country, ourselves included.

If we mean the former, we are only making a conquest, whether we do it by force of arms or by deluding the people of the country into the belief that they may find profit in it. I have already indicated my belief that our race is unequal to the task of peopling the tropic zone, and that it will there find in that regard a competition with nature that it can not endure.

If we mean, then, what I think would be the real outcome of annexation in that direction, simply to unite with ourselves old communities whose race-characteristics would not be materially modified, and on whom we should therefore exert no more modifying influence than we now do, the result would be that for every representation of such a state in the Senate we should have given away a large fraction of the total legislative power of the whole country; and in the representation in the House, we should introduce a strong reinforcement of passion instead of reason, of restless desire of change instead of patient faith in constitutional progress, of disposition to appeal constantly to revolution—in short, of all the tumultuous, corruptible and corrupting elements which have made the so-called Spanish republics a burlesque on self-government. And this we should call national glory!

One can easily understand that a monarchic or aristocratic government should extend its dominion, because there is then a central power that actually gov-

erns, and enjoys some at least of the fruits of dominion; but that *we* should fancy that we increase our glory, our importance, or our happiness, by consenting to let such communities as I have mentioned come and help govern us, is a stultification one could hardly believe possible if we had not seen it.

That the result of it would be quick revolution and total new construction of the national organization, seems to me too plain for argument.

For such a conglomerate organization, if it were formed, the term "nation" would be a misnomer. We sometimes speak as if there were a cosmopolitanism which is a nobler thing than nationality; but if we do, our error is the same as if we should say that society is a nobler thing than home. The closer and narrower relations may savor of selfishness at times; but experience does not show that greater virtue comes of shaking off their influence.

The intensity of personal love for our own country is the necessary basis of patriotism and of all the public virtues. He who has weaned himself from his country so that he is happiest in a permanent residence abroad, is a man to be pitied, and not far from one to be despised.

"Native land," says M. Renan, "is made up of body and soul. The soul, 't is our common memories, customs, legends, our common misfortunes, hopes, and griefs; the body, 't is the soil and the race, the mountains, the rivers, and the characteristic productions,"—" 't is this marriage between man and the country that makes a nation."\*

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\*"La patrie est un composé de corps et d'âme. L'âme, ce sont les souvenirs, les usages, les legendes, les malheurs, les esperances, les regrets communs; le corps, c'est le sol, la race, les montagnes, les fleuves, les productions caracteristiques."—Renan: *Les Apôtres*, 373.

Cities or territories, which have aimed at cosmopolitanism, have uniformly shown the earliest loss of patriotism and nationality. From Corinth and Alexandria to Paris, their history has been substantially the same; populous, rich, glittering with attractions for the visitor, the models of fashion and luxury, making strangers feel at ease by the very absence of convictions or serious purposes of any kind: and by the total want of that patriotism which, to be sure, is often proud and exclusive, they have gone the same course downward till they have been the acknowledged leaders only in trifling pleasures or in vice.

So far as the youth of our own country has given time for the development of such tendencies, our experience does not teach a different lesson. Our cities, which have had most ambitious aims, and which have been the common ground where all races and all classes in life have met and mingled, are by no means the parts of the country to which we would look for examples of pure democracy and good government, or for the safety of our institutions if any great peril were to come upon them from without. The very extremes of wealth and poverty which there meet prevent the growth of patriotism in great measure; for where one class looks upon another with eyes of jealousy and hate, it does not take long to conjure up the evil spirit which attributes poverty to the system of government, and plots relief by means of *émeutes* and revolutions.

It is an error, then, to wish to be cosmopolitan; it is a virtue to be thoroughly patriotic. Our patriotism will find room enough for its exercise in the effort to perfect our government, to promote the real good of all, and to make our whole system in all respects a model of what a free human community should be. In

doing this there will be a far more rational field for glory than in such senseless expansion as I have spoken of. America is already one of the first of earthly powers in numbers and in physical force: let it be your ambition to make her the first in every noble fruit of true civilization and progress.

As a model to her neighbors in order, thrift, and virtue within, and in honorable fair dealing and justice toward all other communities, she will have far higher rank than if she were grasping at the shadow of dominion, which, as we have seen, must prove a delusion and a snare.

And so the race of Americans also, cultivating every quality which can make them a better breed of men, will grow from generation to generation in all that fits them for permanent freedom, while they point the way to those of other races that may live upon their borders or within the country, and make their example an encouragement and a good lesson to the world.

I think I do not appeal in vain to the sympathies and the aspirations of educated American youth, when I invite your thoughts to such subjects of study, and your ambition to such fields of labor.



# Our Country's New Era:

## AN ADDRESS

TO THE

## SOCIETY OF THE ALUMNI

OF

## WITTENBERG COLLEGE,

AT THE COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT, SPRINGFIELD, OHIO,  
JUNE 25, A. D. 1873.

BY

HON. JACOB D. COX.

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